

Sunday 4th January 2004

Mercury Waltham Sunday League (Premier Division) Match at Hazelwood Sports Ground

EDMONTON ROVERS	2	F.C. BOCA HILL	4	HT 1-1
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S.Cokell (12 mins.),
Sutton (87 mins.)

Jackson (Own Goal) (37 mins.),
Warner (Pen.) (57 mins.),
Stanners (60 mins),
Bright (88 mins.)

Edmonton Rovers Line-Up (with Marks out of 10): Simon JACKSON (GK) (6); Chidi IBEKWEM (6), Tony SPELLER (6), Paul WOOLSTON (7), Steve BEASLEY (6½); Derek DORWARD (6½), Paul ELLERKER (6½), Marco ELLERKER (6½), Eric IBEKWEM (6); Conor McGOVERN (6½), Steve COKELL (6½) **Subs.:** Chris BEEDEN (6½), Peter SUTTON (6½)

F.C. Boca Hill's Line-Up: Gary HAWKES (GK); Adam BARNES, Mark PRITCHETT, Jeff GOUMAL, Martin KENNEDY; Louis CHRISIFIODES, Mentesh MENTESH, Jeremy WARNER, Neil BARNES; Pete STANNERS, David NORFOLK **Subs.:** Jamie BRIGHT, Rad BERKOVIC

Referee: Mark SMITH

Weather Conditions: Cold & Cloudy

Attendance: 14



Report: Although we always have a nasty habit of performing badly in our first game after Christmas, we came into this match fairly confident of gaining a third League victory in a row and leap-frogging our opponents F.C. Boca Hill in the Premier Division table. That was because we had all our midfielders & forwards available for the first time this season, which of course included the extra creative availability of Marco Ellerker, Chris Beeden and Peter Sutton, and we therefore assumed that would be good enough to offset the problems we had defensively with skipper Stuart Dorward away on his Honeymoon, Robin Pryke out with a long-term neck injury, John Beasley having retired from playing regularly and Gary Cokell dropping out on the morning of the match after sustaining a back injury while playing for Old Minchendenians the day before.

In fact we got off to the start we were hoping for when a good run by Marco Ellerker in the 12th minute resulted in a mix-up in the Boca Hill defence between goalkeeper Gary Hawkes and defender Martin Kennedy, leaving Steve Cokell (our 'first-choice' centre-forward !) to score his first First Team goal of the season from two yards out...in his 11th First Team appearance of the season ! That sort of record summed up our biggest problem during the current campaign and indeed we didn't really look like adding to that tally during the rest of the First Half as we resorted to our usual tactics of defending deep and encouraging our opponents to shoot from distances which were never going to trouble Simon Jackson, while also dealing easily with numerous corners thanks to our zonal marking system. Unfortunately though, our attempts to punish Boca Hill on the break came to nothing as too many players over-elaborated in front of goal instead of trying a shot...this being almost certainly due to a lack of recent match practice (this was our first game for 4 weeks) and players not attending training to practice their shooting. However, although Boca Hill put us under a lot of pressure in an effort to equalise, we looked like holding onto our lead fairly comfortably as Half-Time approached, but then Simon Jackson had a costly double lapse in concentration in the 37th minute when he picked up a backpass from Paul Woolston just inside his area and then tried to save Jeremy Warner's directly-struck free-kick when Referee Mark Smith was correctly signalling for the kick being indirect (*See picture above right*)...the goal being allowed because Jackson actually got a hand to the shot on it's way in, whereas if he had left it alone then the goal would have been disallowed !! It therefore had to be credited as an Own Goal because of that...Jackson then of course trying to claim that the shot had already crossed the line before he got a hand on the ball, but Referee Smith was hardly likely to spot *that* from his angle...or take Manager/Linesman Trevor Hughes's word for it.

It was a really annoying way to throw away our lead though, but skipper Paul Woolston's Half-Time warning that Boca Hill would come out for the start of the Second Half really fired up because of that went unheeded and they soon started creating some clear-cut chances of their own making as our players started showing their usual appalling post-Christmas lack of fitness and were second to the ball all over the pitch. That saw Boca Hill's useful looking forward Pete Stanners 'sucker' sweeper Tony Speller into a mistimed challenge in the area for an obvious penalty in the 57th minute (*See picture left*) which Jeremy Warner then blasted straight into the middle of the goal with Simon Jackson appearing to take just one step to his right and casually move his body out of the way without diving !?...or were my eyes deceiving me through the viewfinder ?

At least Jackson went on to redeem himself with some good handling of further shots, crosses and high balls, but he had no chance when Boca Hill went 3-1 up just three minutes later when Stanners fired a fierce first-time shot from the edge of the area through a crowd of players following a long throw, which left Jackson completely unsighted.

That goal was a real kick in the teeth for us, as Trevor Hughes had been trying to bring on attacking midfielders Chris Beeden and Peter Sutton for the badly out-of-sorts Chidi & Eric Ibekwem for the last five minutes, but with Tim Beeden in bed again (with a back problem this time though ?) and Trevor having to run the line on the opposite side of the pitch, they both ended up coming on when it was probably too late, although Sutton did manage to make it 3-2 in the 87th minute to give us a bit of hope by running in at the far post to tap in Conor McGovern's excellent low cross. In fact we created numerous clear-cut chances in the Second Half, including one from Derek Dorward which hit the foot of the post, although most of them were after Beeden and Sutton came on, but with our back four now having to push up to the half-way line and play the offside trap because we had no holding player in midfield with Paul Ellerker moving to right-back, we were always likely to concede another goal on the break with sprinting not really being Paul Woolston, Tony Speller or Steve Beasley's forte. Sure enough, just a minute after we had pulled it back to 3-2, a chip over the top of our defence by Boca Hill midfielder Mentesh Mentesh (after he had nutmegged Marco Ellerker !) saw them easily outpaced by substitute Jamie Bright, who drilled in a low shot across Simon Jackson and into the bottom corner to make it 4-2 and kill off the game. Although Boca Hill had former Chaseside Old Boys midfielder Neil Barnes making his debut for them in this match (a known quality player), they were actually without five of their *better* players and we should have been capable of getting at least a point off them on current form. However, only Paul Woolston and substitute Peter Sutton really did themselves justice in this match and everybody else appeared to be still in 'Christmas Mode' and just not sharp enough physically or mentally, thereby leaving us in mid-table obscurity with nothing much to play for this season.